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EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SLOW LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

A child whom we call a slow learner is not always in need of special education. What needs to be understood is such a child is likely to need some extra time and help in regular class room. He is capable by learning like an average child. A slow learner is one who learn at a slower than average rate. Then we have to advise educational programs for slow learners. Slow learner work best with a changeful designed step. Slow learners can learn if instruction is approached changefully. The ways in this reign are tutoring remedial instruction. This paper is dealing with slow learners and their educational programs.

The experience of educators conforms that there are many children who are so backward in basic subjects that they need special help as these pupils have limited scope for achievement. They have intelligence quotients between 76 and 89 and they constitute about 18 percent of the total school population. These students do not stand out as very different from their classmates except that they are always slow on the uptake and are often teased by the other students because of slowness.

Burt (1937) has rightly pointed out that the term backward or slow learner is reserved for those children who are unable to cope with the work normally expected their age group. Jenson (1980) states that students with IQ 80 to 90 who are traditionally labeled dull normal are generally slower to catch on to whatever being taught if it involves symbolic, abstract or conceptual subject matter.

Though both the slow learners and the learning disabled have learning difficulties, there is still difference between the two. A slow learner is one who is unable to do the work of the class in which is placed or even the class below that. Kirk (1963) defines learning disabled as those children who have disorders in development in language, speech, reading, associated communication skills needed for social interaction.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR SLOW LEARNERS:
Psychologists and educationalists have recommended various educational programs to surmount the problem of slow learners in the mainstreaming. The following are remedial measures which constitute the educational programs for slow learners.

MOTIVATION:
"Success of teacher largely depends on how effectively he motivates the students to learn". Experience has shown us that learning failure is very often largely due to poor motivation. Slow learners usually evince an attitude of avoidance resulting from previous experience of failure or dislike of subject. An encouraging smile from the teacher can do better than his verbal instruction. The teacher should be wary not to discourage the slow learners who usually feel frustrated. Moreover, motivation not only instigates the behavior of slow learners but also reinforces the ongoing behavior. In addition to encouraging smile and kind verbal motivation, the teacher can make use of appropriate illustration, example teaching learning material for creating motivational atmosphere inside the class.

INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION:
Individual attention refers to the attention given by the teacher to particular student. Of all students it is the slow learners who need individual attention from the teachers. The individual differences of the children should be properly recognized and the individuality of the child must be respected. Bloom (1976) advocates mastery learning strategy for backward students wherein he allows time to vary for mastery. Special classes for slow learners in the evening after school hours so that they can be given more time as well as better individual attention.

RESTORATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SELF CONFIDENCE:
"The teacher should instill self confidence in the minds of slow learners. For that teacher should avoid magnifying the mistakes committed by the slow learners". So the teacher should take all possible effort and make use of all possible opportunities to restore and develop self –confidence in slow learners which will ultimately encourages them manifesting for better attainment.

DEVELOP OF GOOD WORK HABITS:
Backwardness of slow learners is often the result of development of poor attitude towards work. Frequent failures and frustration may cause behavior difficulties and reluctance to try or take initiative. They not only do not know how to do a work but also when to do a work and which to do first. So it becomes an essential duty of the teacher to develop good work habits in slow learners. How to study each subject how to make responses for questions and how to carry out the project or enrichment activities should be well explained to slow learners and strict vigil also should be kept to make sure that they follow the guidelines given by the teacher in learning the subject.

ELASTIC CURRICULUM:
Poratt (1980) identifies two basic assumptions that underlie all curricula:

i. that knowledge based and

ii. Long term and immediate needs of students.

Utmost care should be taken in preparing the curriculum for the slow learners which should be as flexible as possible who are generally interested in concrete perceptual experiences. Slow learners cannot understand abstract aspects very easily. There must be scope for profuse use audio visual aids for concrete presentation of subject content. Practical work should be given due importance in the curriculum of the slow learners i.e. crafts, arts etc. physical education provides many advantages and opportunities. Such well designed practical curriculums will compensate for other limitation and to ensure feelings of accomplishment and success.

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION:
Rastogi (1978) and Narayana Rao (1987) have suggested that remedial classes should be conducted systematically based on guidelines.

- The instructional content proceeding from easy to difficult and simple to complex.
- Short frequent lessons should be introduced.
- Ample use of audio visual aids in the instructional process.
- Friendly approach in remedial teaching.
- Generate interest, social skills and confidence in slow learners.
- Practice, drill and review the content.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT:
The school environment should be healthy and reasonably free for slow learners. Most often slow learners suffer from emotional problems so utmost care must be taken to place them in protected environment. To ensure this the teacher himself should be allow the other students either to look down upon the slow learners or to tease them.

PERIODICAL MEDICAL CHECK-UP:
Poor health and other malfunctions also have adverse effect on the learning of slow learner. Special medical check-up should be arranged periodically for every slow learner.

SPECIAL METHODS OF TEACHING:
Educationists and psychologists have conducted many experiments to evolve special method of teaching for slow learners George Grapper and Lumsdaine (1961) established the effectiveness of instructional television on the achieve-

ment of low ability students. Leitner (1992) has proved that video instruction is very effective to low ability students. Block and Burns (1976) and Bloom (1976) studied the effective for low achievers. Rajaguru (1994) has proved the effectiveness of video instruction with special reference to slow learners. Ramar (1994), Reddy and Ramar (1994, 1995, 1996) have highlighted the impact of multimedia based modular approach on the achievement of low achievers. Clark (1985) pointed out CAI seems to have greatest positive effect for elementary students, moderate effect for high school students, and lowest effect for college students. The research evidence revealed that the following special methods will be very effective for slow learners.

- Audio and video instructions
- Mastery learning strategy
- Modular instruction
- Computer assisted instruction

1. **Audio and video Instruction:** Slow learners can listen to audio instruction based on their subject units in the evening hours. Also they can listen to relevant educational radio program which also has positive effect on the learning. The video instruction provides unique experience to the slow learners in the presentation of instructional content. The dual effect of audio and video strengthens and enriches the understanding and expedites the mastery of the concept.

2. **Mastery learning strategy:** One widely used means of adapting instruction to the needs of diverse students is called mastery learning (Block and Anderson, 1975; Block and Burno, 1976, Bloom, 1976). Mastery learning is a system of instruction that emphasizes the achievement of instructional objectives by all students by devotedly tackle the slow learners. Corrective instruction can be imparted in the remedial special classes in the evening hours.

3. **Modular Instruction:** Module is a self contained auto instructional package dealing with a single conceptual unit or subject matter. Instruction through modules has been found very effective for all levels of students and it is found more effective with regard to low achievers and slow learners. Various research evidences conform this (Dhamija 1985; Hopper, 1982; Sahajahan, 1980. Ramar 1994; Reddy and Ramar 1994, 1995, 1996; NataraJan, 1996). This modular instruction is a special method of teaching, can be very effective to slow learners since it enables the slow learners to adequately overcome their problems in learning. A detailed account of how each of the problems of slow learners is overcome in the modular instruction can be systematically listed out.

   Slow learners are weak in memory, so they need more practice and repetition. Modular instruction takes care of these problems by providing frequent revision and repetition in each module.

4. **Computer Assisted Instruction:** Computer assisted instruction is a kind of individualized instruction administered by a computer. CAI provides unique experience to learners in respect of the presentation of the content. It ensures easy and effective transmission of instruction of the learner. It gives instant knowledge of results and provides immediate feedback to slow learners.

   Research studies (O'Donnal, 1982; Billings, 1983; Chambers and Sprecher, 1983; Atkinson , 1984; Kulik et al, 1984; Niemiec and Walberg, 1985) generally agree that CAI can be very effective in increasing student achievement but has smaller and less consistent achievement effect when it entirely replaces classroom instruction. Clark (1985) points out that the positive effects of CAI seems to greatest for elementary students and lowest for college students. Effects of CAI are the strongest of low achievers. Delon (1970) found that CAI program significantly increased the mathematics achievement of disadvantaged first graders.

   Many CAI programs stress drill and practice experiences, others teach students facts and concepts. CAI programs have following advantages.

   - Use of a structured curriculum
   - Letting students work at their own pace
   - Giving students controlled , frequent feedback and reinforcement
   - Measuring performance quickly and giving students information on their performance.

LEARNING CONTRACTS AND PEER TUTORING:

- **Learning Contracts:** A learning contract is an agreement between the teacher and student to study and share information about specific topic. It helps the class room teacher to organize the instructional program for some exceptional students. Dunn and Dunn (1974) describe that contracting may be effective for slow learners who are motivated when allowed to participate in designing their instructional activities.

- **Peer Tutoring:** Peer tutoring means that one student teaches another. There are two types of peer tutoring: cross age tutoring where the tutor is several years older than the student being taught, and same age peer tutoring where one student tutors a classmate. Cross-age tutoring is more often recommended by researchers than same age tutoring (Devin – Sheehan et al, 1976), partly because of the obvious fact that older students are more likely to know the material and partly because students may accept old students as a tutor but resent having a classmate appointed to tutor them.

CONCLUSION:

A competent teacher should be alert to general characteristics of the associated class room behavior related to learner difficulties of child. A slow learner needs more time to acquire the skill than his average poor the slow learner will reply on concrete learning than abstract learning. This calls for early identification, diagnosis of their learning difficulties and proper instructional precisions for them. Adolescent slow learners are usually benefited from carefully guided instructions.

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